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TITLE: California Perinatal HIV Testing Project

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ISSUE: In 1996, California passed legislation mandating that prenatal care providers offer HIV information, counseling and testing to all women during prenatal care (SB 889, Health and Safety Code 125107). Concurrently, the Ryan White CARE Act amendments of 1990 were implemented that also mandated the same services. In response to these policies the California Department of Health Services, Office of AIDS, established the California Perinatal HIV Testing Project (CPP).

SETTING: The CPP was implemented throughout California, to prenatal care providers and their prenatal patients.

PROJECT: The overall objective was to reduce the rate of perinatal HIV transmission throughout California. Provided services included the dissemination of HIV resource packets and technical assistance in 5 California counties with high rates of HIV. The objectives for the development of the resource packet were multifarious. Resources were developed to support providers in meeting their responsibilities as mandated by California law and to supply materials that facilitated the standardization of HIV education, counseling, and testing to all pregnant clients. The HIV epidemic disproportionately affects women of color. The resource packets included culturally competent HIV and pregnancy educational materials produced in English and Spanish. The materials consisted of a flip chart, accompanying client brochures, and exam room posters. Resource packets included HIV counseling and testing guidelines in accordance with California law, and were also used by providers during HIV education and counseling.

RESULTS: An external evaluation of the resource packet (via telephone survey) examined the utilization, and satisfaction using a systematically selected sample of prenatal care providers. Educational materials were sent to 5,660 prenatal care providers. The evaluation of 423 providers statewide of which 272 interviews were completed rendered the following: 1) 100% of respondents stated they were using the materials with pregnant women and some also reported use of materials with wider audiences; 2) 97% of respondents reported overall satisfaction with materials, and believed the clients understood the messages being conveyed.

LESSONS LEARNED: The initial objectives of the project were met and exceeded. It is germane that appropriate cultural perspectives incorporated into HIV educational materials increase their applicability, and facilitate providers' counseling on sensitive topics related to sexuality and other risk behaviors.

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